

A FARTHER
VINDICATION
OF THE
SHORT VIEW
OF THE
PROFANENESS
AND
IMMORALITY
OF THE
English Stage.

In which the
OBJECTIONS
Of a late Book, Entituled,
A Defence of Plays,
ARE CONSIDER'D.

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L O N D O N :

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A
R E P L Y
T O

Dr. *FILMER*'s
D E F E N C E of P L A Y S, &c.

HAVING receiv'd no Answer to my *Second Defence* ² of my *Short* ¹ *Reply to the Ancient and Modern Stages survey'd, &c.* View, &c. in seven Years, I concluded the *Stage-Controversie* was over. But there's no reckoning upon the Intermissions of a Contest. Dr. *Filmer* has at last enter'd the Lists, and reviv'd the Quarrel. It must be said this Gentleman has given himself time enough to make his Attack, and bring up the Forces of the Cause. The Supplies of Conversation, the Remarks of the Criticks, and all the Succours of the *Play-House Confederacy* must probably have

reach'd him before now. By taking *Horace's* Advice, of

De Arte
Poet.

—*Nonnumq; premantur in annum,* ^b

He has had great leisure for bringing his Thoughts to Review and Recollection. But then as some things improve, so others decay upon Time. Now whether the Doctor is a Sufferer this way or not; whether his Hand has not shook, and his Aim been broken by levelling thus long, the Reader must judge.

Before I come to debate the Difference between us, I must acquaint the Reader, how far we are agreed: And here the Doctor goes a great length in his Concessions. He owns the *Stage* guilty of remarkable *Abuses*. That this Misbehaviour has made a great Noise in the World^c; that a due regulation in these Matters has been expected; and earnestly desir'd by the most sober part of the Nation^d: That many of our Modern Poets have been very much to blame, and err'd in Fundamentals. They seem, says this Gentleman, to have made choice of Characters only for their Lewdness, and have frequently crown'd Vice with the Reward of Virtue^e. He confesses, the Comick Poets have mismanag'd to a horrible Excess of Libertinism and Irreligion: And that the Tragedies

^c Dr. Fil.
mer's De-
fence of

Plays. Pref.

p. 1, 2.

^d Pref. p. 4.

^e Id. Book

p. 4.

gedies produc'd in the View, &c. are irregular in the distribution of Rewards and Punishments ^f. In short, he makes no difficulty to say, the Disorders of the Stage have given me a very fair opportunity of exposing our Poets as Atheists, and representing the Stage as a place hated by God, and haunted by the Devil ^g.

^g Pref. p. 2.

In discoursing upon the Head of Profaneness, he grants *many of the Quotations* cited by me, *are extremely scandalous and wicked* ^h. He is positive, *nothing either Atheistical or Irreligious; nothing in the least Profane, should fall from under the Comick Poet's Pen, under any pretence of Character whatsoever* ⁱ. He honestly declares, *no Story, no Phrase, no Expression whatsoever in the Bible, may be repeated; or so much as alluded to, without Sin* ^k. And though he is now abridging the Liberties of Comedy, yet the compass of his Assertion, and the Force of his Reasoning, affects Tragedy, and reaches the Stage, under all distinctions. And here he goes on, declaiming against the abuse of Scripture, with a strong Air of Conscience, and fair Meaning.

^h P. 39.

ⁱ Id. p. 63.

^k P. 64.

After all this acknowledgment, and more to the same purpose, who could have expected a *Play-House Advocate* in the Doctor? On the other hand, since the Liberties continue unreform'd; since they *Act* their soul

detected *Plays* over again; since their *new* *Plays* are ¹ short of the Doctor's Reformation; since the Case stands thus, one would have thought he should rather have exerted himself against the incorrigibleness of the *Theatre*, and endeavour'd to dissuade the *Town* from frequenting so infectious a Place, so scandalous a Diversion. One would have thought he might have propos'd at least some new Remedy, mov'd for some significant *Test*, and suggested the seizure of counter-band Goods: That he would have erected an *Office* of Reformation, a Court of Justice, where the Judge might not be prepossess'd in favour of the Criminal, nor the *Bench*, and the *Bar* hold Intelligence with each other. His pleading for the *Play-House*, while it continues in *Face Romuli*, and goes on in the old Road, argues, either that he does not perceive the consequence of his Concessions, (which excuse can hardly be made for a Man of the Doctor's Understanding) or else, that all his Pretences for Reformation, are nothing but Amusement and Grimace. Indeed I wish there is not more of Art than good Earnest, in the Doctor's Scheme. By this expectation, that *Matters will mend*, the present Disorders are more under Cover, and the Mischief has the freer Passage. And thus, if we will but swallow Poyson

a little while, we shall be fed with better Diet afterwards.

And yet after all, we shall find the Doctor's *Nastrum's* are much too weak to reach the Disease, and carry off the ill Humours. To speak clearly, he considers the *Palate* too much in his *Bill*, and prescribes more to Pleasure than Health.

Having premis'd the Doctor's *concessions*, I shall proceed to joyn Issue with him, and engage the force of his *Book*.

To shew the Stage was not left to the Liberties of *Heathen* precedents, I cited *St. Paul* for my Authority. His words are these.

But Fornication, and all Uncleanness, or Covetousness, let it not be once named among you, Ephes. v. 3, 4

as becometh Saints. Neither Filthiness, nor foolish Talking, nor Jesting, which are not convenient ^m.

The Doctor, to avoid the Rebuke ^m *First Defence of the Short View, &c. p. 8.* of this plain Text, endeavours to turn part of it upon me. He pretends, if these words are to be taken in a literal Sense, then

Covetousness must not be nam'd any more than the rest: *And yet I have given up this Vice to the Stage Poets, to make Sport with* ⁿ.

To this I need only observe, that *Παρουσία*, ⁿ *Dr. Filmer's Defence of Plays, p. 18, 19.* which is translated *Covetousness*, imports unnatural Debauchery, and comes up to the Sin for which *Sodom* and *Gomorrah* were destroy'd. Thus the learned *Dr. Ham-*

mond understands the Original, and proves his Interpretation from the Connexion of the words, from other places in the *Old* and *New Testament*, and from the common use of it in this Sense, among Pagan Authors °.

° Hammon.
in Loc. &
Annot. on
Rom. i.

Dr. *Filmer* goes on with the *Text*, and seems very much disturb'd at the rigour of the *Precept*. *I never knew before*, says he, *that a Christian could not break a Jest, without breaking a Commandment* P.

¶ Dr. Fil-
mer. p. 20.

To relieve him a little, he may please to take notice, that *jesting* is joyn'd by the Apostle with *foolish talking*. Now that *Μωρολογία*, or *foolish talking*, signifies rank, luscious, and scandalous Conversation; the Learned *Hammond* makes out to a full Evidence. And thus the *jesting* condemn'd by the Apostle, imports smutty Discourse made use of for Laughing and Diversion. And that the *Heathens* look'd upon these as unwarrantable Latitudes, I have prov'd from the Testimonies of *Euripides*, *Aristotle*, and *Livy* 1.

¶ *Viem, &c.*
p. 35, 159,
160, 161.

The Doctor perceiving the *Stage* lie terribly expos'd, enters his Caveat, and tells us, *This is stretching our Apostle's meaning to a higher pitch than ever he intended* 2.

2 Defence
Plays,
p. 21.

How does this appear? Because, as he argues, when St. Paul recapitulates these Crimes in the fifth Verse, he repeats *Fornication*, and *Uncleanness*, &c. but not a word

word of obscene and filthy Talking ¹. Does ^{Ibid.}

the Doctor infer an allowance from this Omission? Because the Apostle does not go the whole length in his Repetition, therefore he has given a toleration for Smut and Indecency! Is not one plain Prohibition strong enough to bind the Conscience? Are we not to take notice of the Divine Laws, unless they are repeated upon us? However, if this ungodly Liberty would pass, the Doctor is in no condition to claim the Benefit. For the Precept in question, is frequently inculcated by the same Apo-

stle. The places are these. *Evil Commu-* ^{1 Cor. xv.}
nication corrupts good Manners. Let no cor- ^{33.}
rupt Communication proceed out of your ^{Ephes. iv.}
Mouth. But now you put off all filthy Com- ^{29.}
munication. ^{Colos. iii.}
^{8.}

I am sorry I have an Adversary that makes this Quotation necessary. *The Confidence of some Men!* For here I can't forbear using the Doctor's civil Exclamation. But I must take notice of his other Evasion. He gives me to understand, that unless I *can make out, the Apostle forbids all obscene filthy Talking and Jestings, under the same Penalty that he does Fornication, and actual Uncleanness, he can't see the Text above cited can do half the intended Execution* ¹. Not forbidden under the

same Penalties! They are plainly con- ^{Defence of}
^{Plays. ibid.}
 demned as unlawful Liberties. They are
 forbidden

forbidden as Heathen Impurities, and a breach of the Engagements of Baptism; as inconsistent with the Sobriety of Christians, and the Dignity of Saints. The venturing therefore upon this Practice, must of necessity incur the Divine Displeasure, forfeit our future Happiness; and then the Doctor knows what must follow. What though foul Talking is not so bad as Fornication? A Man may be lost without going to the highest degrees of Guilt. Stealing is not so bad as Murther; and yet *Thieves*, without Repentance, *shall not inherit the Kingdom of God.*

1 Cor. vi.
10.

The Doctor, rather than part with the Stage Entertainment, is so hardy as to affirm, that *Filthiness, and foolish Talking*, are censur'd no farther in the Text, than as inconvenient: And then only Criminal, when either us'd in Excess, by way of Encouragement to others, &c^u. He founds this softning Sense, this extraordinary Comment, upon these words of the Text

^u Defence
of Plays,
p. 22

Ephes. v. 4. *τὰ ἐν ἀνῆκοντα*, which are not convenient. Does St. Paul then censure those things only as inconvenient, which just before he declar'd against as not so much as to be nam'd amongst Christians? Which he had so earnestly forbidden in the other Places already cited? To go to the Propriety, and common acceptation of the Phrase: *τὰ ἐν ἀνῆκοντα*,

ἀνῆκοντα,

ἀνήκοντα, means those Actions which are foreign, and out of Character, contradictions to Decency and Duty. And besides, where the Case is so very plain, and the Blemish so easily discover'd, the *Scripture* does not always use the strongest Expressions in the Prohibition. If Dr. *Filmer* questions this Remark, he may find it made good by the Learned *Hammond* in several Instances ^w. To these I shall add ^w Annot. in 12 St. Mat. in C. one which comes up fully to the present Case.

St. Paul having given a short Recital of the hideous Immorality of the *Heathens* ^x, ^x Rom. i. subjoyns, that God gave them over to a ^{from v. 24,} ^{to 29.} *reprobate Mind*, to do those things which are not convenient, *τὰ μὴ καὶ ὀφειλόμενα*; which is a perfect equivalent to *ἀνήκοντα*. Immediately after these words, the Apostle proceeds in the List of the Crimes, and tells us, They were fill'd with all Unrighteousness, Fornication, Wickedness, Maliciousness, &c. Thus, in St. Paul's Language, ^{v. 29. to 32.} the most flaming Instances of Vice, the last excesses of Villany, are call'd *things which are not convenient*.

But notwithstanding the complexion of the Practice is so black, the Doctor goes boldly on in the Cause, and affirms, *obscenity is then only declar'd sinful by the Apostle, when either us'd in Excess, by way of encourage-*

* Defence of
Plays,
p. 22.

*encouragement to others, or by our selves
set up in competition with our Duty to God &c.*

*When us'd in excess ! As if it was al-
low'd under several Degrees and Limita-
tions ! But it may be he means 'tis then
only excessive, when us'd by way of En-
couragement to others. For the purpose :
If a Man picks a Pocket, provided 'tis done
only for his own Advantage, without any
design to propagate the Mystery, and make
the Trade common : Provided the Point
is thus guarded, though it may be incon-
venient for the Person that loses his Mo-
ney, yet there's no manner of Crime in
the Dexterity ! Farther ; either Smut, and
rank Language, is an innocent defens-
ible practice, or not : If 'tis innocent,
where's the Crime of encouraging others ?
What Sin can it be to recommend a safe
inoffensive Liberty ? But if 'tis an ill
thing, if 'tis *malum in se*, how dares any
one venture upon it ? And what Autho-
rity has the Doctor to give a Dispensation ?
And if luscious and lewd Discourse is
highly scandalous and unchristian, then cer-
tainly we are bound to decline it. From
whence it follows, that those who indulge
the Practice, set up this Liberty in compe-
tition with their Duty to God, which is a
Sin even by the Doctor's Confession **

* Id. p. 23.

I have been the longer upon this Matter, to rescue the *Text* from the Doctor's licentious *Comment*. The wretchedness of the Argument put him upon this desperate Push. He foresaw the *Stage* could be no otherwise defended: He frankly confesses, that unless *Filthiness, obscenity of Speech, and idle Jestings, are admitted, all our Comedies will be swept off*. And thus ^{P. 20.} he seems to boggle at no Expedient, and is resolv'd to maintain his Post at the utmost Hazard. Thus some Men, rather than give up an unwarrantable Diversion, venture to tamper with the Holy *Text*, and wrest it to Looseness and Scandal. Thus the inspir'd Writings are made Ministerial to Vice; and brought to countenance those Liberties which are the Aversions of Natural Conscience, and stand condemn'd by Heathen Sobriety. Can the Doctor expect *Consolation*, as he calls it ^a, from ^{* Pref. p. 11.} such Management as this? And that *the Justice of the Cause* will relieve his Spirits, though *success* should not answer. ^{Ibid.}

To shew the Profaneness of the *Stage*, ^{b Matth. v.} with respect to Swearing, I quoted St. *Mat-* ^{James v.} *them* and St. *James* against this Liber- ^{First De-} ^{sence of the} ^{View in} ^{Answer to} ^{the Amend-} ^{ments, &c.} ^{p. 134.} ^{c Dr. Fil-} ^{mer, p. 28.} ^{end} ^{ty} ^b. *What!* says the Doctor, *is all swear-* ^{ing unlawful?} *I hope our Author is not* ^{turn'd Quaker} ^c. Not at all. I grant an assurance of fair Dealing, and putting an

Heb. vi. 16. *end to Strife*, is a very defensible Motive for such an Expedient. But are there any Affidavits to be made upon the *Stage*, any Titles to be try'd, any *Treaties* to be sign'd and ratify'd? Is there any occasion for the discovery of Truth, the Tryal of Malefactors, or doing Right to the Publick Interest? Now these, and such like, are the only justifiable grounds for swearing. But when an Oath is unnecessary, it comes under the Gospel Prohibition, and is certainly a Crime. But the Doctor is of another mind; he makes no scruple to affirm, That *when a wicked Wretch swears upon the Stage, 'tis not taking God's Name in vain; nor implies any contempt of his Majesty*^d. His Reason is, because the Man is punish'd for his Misbehaviour, and made Guilty for a warning^e to others. At this rate a Man may have a Patent for the Highway, provided he is but secur'd to Justice, and forth-coming for the Gallows. 'Tis no matter for his taking a Purse, and making bold with the Constitution, and committing Murther upon the Road: Let him but be hang'd in *Terrorem*, and People have the Benefit of seeing him suffer, and all's well enough. But I have reply'd to this Objection already, and shall consider it no farther^e. However, the Doctor supposes an Oath or two, or it may be more, may be put in the

^a Defence of Plays, p. 28, 31. Ibid.

^e Reply to the Amendments, p. 15. Second Defence of the View, &c. p. 60.

the Mouth of an Atheist, without any manner of Profaneness ^f. This is a most admirable Provision to secure the *Franchises* of the *Stage* ! But then the Doctor is so scrupulous, as not to allow a *Stage Bully* to lard every Sentence, and swear upon the stretch ^g.

^f Dr. Filmer, p. 28, 32.

By the Doctor's Divinity, one would think there was a certain number of Oaths requir'd, to the making a Man criminal. But I believe every body will find the Essence of Sin consists in the Obliquity of the Act, in the Transgression of the Law, and in going off from the Rule of Duty. 'Tis true, the Repetition of an ill thing, heightens the Degree, and inflames the Guilt, but does not affect the Quality of the Practice.

But *Stage-swearing* is only to make a profane Character more *lively* and *natural*, and therefore mayn't an Oath or two pass ^h ² *Ibid*. By this Argument, when a Man is to dye in *Tragedy*, he should be kill'd in earnest. For to see him agonizing, and weltring in his Blood, would heighten the Action extremely, and affect the Company to an unusual Degree. This fighting in earnest made the *Gladiators* more agreeable to the Romans: Thus unless there's Mischief done at a *Prize*, the Fencers are rail'd on, and the Company think themselves cheated. And therefore to illustrate the Matter farther; If the Destruction

tion of *Troy* was to be represented, though we must not go the length of *Nero's* Fancy, and set the *Town* in a Blaze : Nay, probably the Doctor is so scrupulous as not to admit the laying all *Drury-lane*, and the *Hay-market* in Ashes. But then setting Fire to the *Stage*, and burning a House or two, or it may be more, as he has it, would be very necessary to give Truth and Spirit to the Performance.

These Instances, I hope, may serve to disentangle the Doctor's Understanding. For if the Plea of Imitation, and Dramatick Interest, won't excuse Murther and burning of Houses, why should Profaneness pretend to this *Liberty* ? I don't say swearing an Oath is as bad as committing Murther : But this I affirm, that swearing is a profane Liberty, 'tis an Insolence upon God Almighty ; 'tis a breach of Law Divine and Humane. And this is sufficient to make the Instance parallel, and give force to the Comparifon. Now if common swearing is Wicked and Irreligious in other Places, how comes it to be inoffensive in the *Play-House* ? Have the *Poets* a discharge from the Duties of Religion, and a Privilege to insult their *Maker* ?

Well ! though the Doctor can't produce their *Exemption*, he'll endeavour to serve them another way. If the Penalties of Religion can't be taken off, he'll try to cover them

them from the *Law*. For if he can but secure them from *Indictments*, he concludes their Consciences will shift well enough.

For this purpose, he puts them in a way to carry on their Profaneness in defiance of the *Statute*. Let them but forbear the^{3 Jac. I. cap. 21.} mention of the Name of God, and some other few Instances, and the *Act* can't touch themⁱ. As much as to say, the^{i Defence of Plays, p. 33.} Diversion of Oaths, and Cursing, is not so mightily cramp'd as some People fancy. Let them but swear with Discretion, and they are safe enough! For, as he observes, some of our *Poets* swear frequently by *Heaven*, and sometimes too by *Hell*; and yet he can't see how either of those Oaths, or any other of the like Nature, are forbidden by this *Act*. I believe he may see it if he^{ibid.} pleases: For has not our Saviour told us, That he that swears by *Heaven*, swears by the^{S. Mat. xxiii.} Throne of God, and by him that sits there-^{22.} on. I hope the Doctor does not think our *Legislators* question'd the Authority of this Resolution: And if not, the swearing by *Heaven* must fall under the discountenance of the *Act*, and come within the compass of the Prohibition.

The Doctor's next attempt is, to gloss away the meaning of the *Statute*, and make it signifie nothing. *There is not the least mention*, says he, *made in this Act, either*

^k Defence of
Plays,
p. 34.

of direct, or indirect swearing; and how then is it forbidden ^k? Not forbidden! Does not the *Act* declare against the great Abuse of the Holy Name of God in Stage-Plays? And is not the Name of God abus'd in common swearing? Not abus'd, when the Divine Majesty is made bold with, to shew the contempt of his Power, to attest Trifles, and grace an intemperate Passion?

ⁱ Ibid.

He has another reserve, and argues, That the use of the Name of God on the Stage is no otherwise prohibited, than as it may be jestingly, or profanely abus'd there^l. By this Gentleman's favour, the *Act* supposes the Play-houses all Sport and Diversion; and that the Name of God can't be mention'd there without Jest and Prophanation. For what are Plays but Buffooning, Fiction, and Farce, design'd for the entertainment of the Audience?

But though the Stage is in Jest, the Law is in Earnest: And that his reading upon the Statute won't pass in Westminster-Hall, the Players can satisfy him from their own Experience. He pretends, I may as well tax our Poets with the sin of Lying, as that of Swearing, because they vent a great many untruths in their Dramatick Characters^m. To this Cavil 'tis sufficient to return, that the Instance is by no means parallel.

^m Id. p. 30.

parallel. He may as well say, because Falshood and failing in Honour, may pass upon the *Stage* with Discipline at the end on't; therefore the *Players* may Stab and Pistol one another! For since the *Poet* does not fight in Person, since the Men are destroy'd in Jest, and die only like *Gladia-tors*, to divert the Company, all's well enough.

Secondly, Lying is a Fault, because it makes the Marks of *Speech* insignificant, destroys Trust between Man and Man, and weakens the Interest of *Society*. But when Truth is known to be strain'd only in Jest, and the Lyar suffers by the Liberty, here no body is deceiv'd, or encouraged: And thus the Sting is pull'd out, and the Malignity prevented.

But some practices are intolerable under every Circumstance: Like Murther, no pretence of inward Dislike, of Proxy or Representation, of Jest, or Repetition, will excuse them. And of this kind, *Swearing* is one. 'Tis an out-rage of Religion, and a bold Contempt of the greatest Being. The bare pronouncing makes the Crime; the Guilt sticks upon the *Syllables*, and 'tis a Sin in the Sound. The Doctor seems somewhat sensible of this Truth: For what Reason else does he confine his *Bullies* and *Atheists* from their full range in Swearing

and Profaneness? What makes him clog their Humour, and tie them up to an Oath or two ⁿ? He lets his *Lyars* go at large, and neither stints them in Quality or Number. His restraint therefore upon *Swearing* is a plain Confession of the disparity of the Case.

^a *Idem.* p. 28, 69. *But the Poets don't speak their own sense* ^o. That signifies nothing: I have told him already, that he who makes a Man mad, must answer for his distraction ^p.

^p *Reply to the Relapser*, p. 108. His saying the *Poets Heart does not go along with their Pen*; if 'tis true, is quite short of a Defence ^q. Whether the Doctor knows it or not, the *Pen* is a dangerous Weapon, if untowardly manag'd; and has ruin'd many a one, though neither their *Heart*, nor their *Head*, has gone along with it. To illustrate the Matter.

^q *Defence of Plays*, p. 30. What if a Man signs away his *Estate*, or sets his Hand to a *Plot*, without thinking? Will the Plea of his Folly indemnifie him? If the *Poets* will venture to make sport with Profaneness, resign their Conscience to their Interest, and gratifie Libertines at the expence of Religion, they must account for their Misbehaviour. And though the *Stage-Poets* are not always bound to *speak their own Sentiments* ^r, yet to swear, or blaspheme in Fiction, is much more than they are allow'd. His Instance therefore in

Sir *John Denham*, and my Lord *Orrery*, is quite wide of his purpose. For if the *Persons* in the *Sophy*, or *Mustapha*, had droll'd upon the *Trinity*, or burlesqu'd the four *Gospels*, the cover of a Turkish Character would have been a lamentable Excuse. And though we could not conclude the *Authors Mahometans* from this management, yet we might think them *Atheists*, and that's worse¹. Nay, give the Doctor but leave^{Id. p. 31.} to write on, and forget himself, and we shall find him come out with the same Truth, without much mincing the matter. Towards the latter end of his *Book*^{Id. p. 152.}, he lets us know, 'tis probable the *Heathen Stage*^{153.} *expos'd the Christian Faith, and made merry with the most sacred Mysteries*. For this reason, says the Doctor, the *Fathers* stood aloof in their Satyr, and only *binted the Profaneness*. To this reservedness they were oblig'd, in Reverence to Religion: For, as he continues, *they could not enlarge upon such bellish practices without Horror*. And if the *Fathers* declin'd repeating profane Discourse, and ought to do it, as the Doctor argues; I say, if they declin'd the mention of Profaneness, though in order to stigmatize and detest it; can we imagine they would have resign'd it to Pleasure, and allow'd it for Diversion?

He tells me, I charge only six *Plays* with swearing ^u : But this is a Mistake, as the Doctor might easily have discover'd ^w.

^v See Preface to the first Defence of the View, &c.

^x Defence of Plays, p. 34.

He is not pleas'd with my representing Swearing in the *Play-House*, as a breach of good breeding to the Women ^x. But if Swearing before Women is ill Manners in other Places, why not upon the *Stage*? How come the *Players* to be discharg'd from common Decency? The Doctor pretends,

^{ib. & p. 36.} the *Actors*, and the *Ladies*, don't make the same Company. By his favour, though they don't address the *Ladies*, excepting in the *Prologue* and *Epilogue*, yet they are within sight and hearing. And thus the *Dialogue* passing all under the *Ladies* notice, the *Actors* are ty'd to the common Rules of Decorum. 'Tis true, the Doctor is of another mind; but what if the *Ladies* are so nice, as not to be of his Opinion? What if they have so much Conscience, as not to think themselves diverted with Cursing, Swearing, and other scandalous Behaviour? Why then he frankly tells them, They must e'en stay at Home, and wave the *Diversion of the Theatre* ^y. For unless they can entertain themselves with *Bullies* and *Prostitutes*, acting in the scandal of their Character, they must be very much disappointed by the *Players*. The arguing against this Liberty, he calls *wretched Stuff* ^z, and

^y P. 36.

^z P. 37.

and complains, the *Stage* will be quite ruin'd by such restraints ^a: That is to say, ^a P. 38. they must either do Mischief, or nothing.

But after all, the Doctor is not easie under his distinctions about *Swearing*: He doubts he may be blam'd for what he has said upon the subject, and represented as a favourer of this Vice ^b. Truly I think his ^b Pref. p. 9. apprehensions are very reasonable: But how does he disengage himself? He desires the Reader to take notice, that he no where recommends the use of it to our Poets. But since he allows it upon extraordinary occasions ^c, ^c Preface, p. 10. and leaves the regulation to the Poet's Conscience; since he takes pains to shew the convenience, and argues in Defence of the practice; since he makes no scruple of going these lengths, what signifies his Declaration? All this demureness amounts to no more than *protestatio contra Factum*; disclaiming his own Act, and renouncing that in the *Preface*, which he maintains in the *Book*.

To proceed. The Doctor will have it, the *Argument* led me to engage the *Liber-tine*; and that I should have shewn no pretence of *Stage-Discipline* would have atton'd for the Smut and Profaneness in that *Play*. But, it seems, the *Catastrophe* was there too exemplary and terrible for my purpose ^d. ^d Pag. 43, 44, 45.

To this I answer:

B 4

First,

First, That I have already perform'd what the Doctor requires. I have shewn in general, that no Stage Discipline, though never so severe, will justify the representation of *Smut* and *Profaneness* ^e.

^a *Short View, &c.*
p. 96. *First Defence of the View, &c.* p. 8, to 18.

Secondly, If I had happen'd to have been short in this matter, the Doctor could have supply'd that defect. For he grants, the *Comick Poet* ought not to fly out into the grossest extravagancies of *Smut*, under the pretence of representing a *Whore*, or a *Pimp*: Nor the *Tragick Poet* fly in the Face of Heaven, and blaspheme at any rate, under the

^f *Defence of Plays,* p. 62.

protection of *Stage Discipline* ^f. By these Rules he has plainly condemn'd the *Liber-tine*, notwithstanding the Justice and Terror of the *Catastrophe*. For this *Play*, by his own Confession, *has three times as much Smut, Profaneness, and Blasphemy, as any*

^g *Id.* p. 43.

Stage performance cited by me ^g. This *Play* then has gone to the extent of an *Athei-stick Character* ^h.

^h *Id.* p. 69.

The strokes are gross, and dawb'd all over the Piece, and not sparingly, nicely, and carefully manag'd, as the Doctor prescribes ⁱ. And yet atter all, he

ⁱ *Ibid.*

is so frank as to declare, that if I had attack'd this *Play* with success, I had shaken the very Foundation of the *Play-House*, and gain'd an absolute Victory ^k. Now the Doctor has done this business for me, and made the attempt unnecessary. No Gun-powder could

^k *Id.* p. 45.

could blow up the *Theatre* more effectually than these Concessions and Maxims laid down by this Gentleman.

He urges the Profaneness of *Prometheus*, and *Ajax*, in *Æschylus* and *Sophocles*: He observes the *Short View*, &c. excuses the representation of these Sallies upon the score of *Stage Discipline*: From hence he infers, a Christian *Stage Poet* may take the same liberty ^l.

^l *Id.* p. 46.
to 50.

To this it may be return'd,

First, That the Character of the Heathen Gods was foul and blemish'd: This circumstance made the liberty taken with them more excuseable.

Secondly, Heathens and Christians are under a different Regulation; for this reason we can't argue for the same Latitude from one to the other. Different rules alter the nature of Duty, and oblige to a different Practice ^m. To which I may add, that the Doctor owns the *Fathers could not enlarge on the blasphemies of the Heathens without Horror* ⁿ.

^m *Short View*, &c. p. 14.
ⁿ *Second Defence of the View*, &c. p. 107.
^o *Defence of Plays*, p. 153.

The Doctor goes on, and lets us know how tender he is of the *Play-House* interest, and what we are to expect from his *Reformation*. He is resolv'd to deal gently with them, and leave them a stock of their old *Commodities* to trade with. He lays it down for a Maxim, that if *Smut* and *Profaneness* can't

can't be allow'd, the *Poets* must have few, or
 *Id. p. 61. *no Characters to practice on*°. These things
 it seems are necessary Ingredients of Diver-
 sion, and Fundamental to the satisfaction of
 Mankind. But then to varnish over the
 matter, he tells us, *Smut must not be out of*
Character, or too gross in Terms or Sense :
 But when 'tis wrap'd up in clean Linen, and
 lies in double Entendres, 'tis easie and natu-
 *Id. p. 65. *ral*, and he sees no great danger in it P.

It may be so ! However, *Livy* was not at a
 ° Institut. of the Doctor's mind 9. I'm sorry to find
 1. 6. c. 3. this *Christian Reformer* fall short of *Pagan*
Virtue,

But to make the Indulgence more signifi-
 cant, the Doctor out of his great Courtesie,
 has left the regulation of this matter with
 the *Poets* : They are to state the Proportion ;
 to settle the Dose, and weigh out the Scrup-
 les. But why must the *Audience* be en-
 tertain'd with *Smut*, convey'd with Advant-
 age ? Is it to make the Poison more palat-
 able ; to make the Attack more under cover,
 and convey the Infection with less Infamy ?
 These are bad designs. *Smut* under any
 disguise, is inconsistent with the sobriety
 of Religion : *Evil Communication corrupts*
 good Manners. These are some of the un-
 fruitful works of darkness, with which we
 are forbidden to have any Fellowship. I can't
 help putting the Question again : This
Smut

1 Cor. xv.

33.

Ephes. v.

11.

Smart thus dress'd and varnish'd, to what purpose is it us'd? For the benefit of Instruction? That won't do. His answer must be, 'tis to please the *Audience*, and give Spirit to the Entertainment. That is in other words, 'tis to solcite the Fancy, and awaken the Folly of the Passions. Now there's no need of Suggestion and Incitement: People are apt to run too fast of themselves, and like *Phaeton's* Horses,

—*Labor est inhibere volantes.*

Abstinence and Mortification has formerly been thought necessary for the security of Virtue: What else is the meaning of the Discipline and Fasting prescrib'd by the Church? What made so many holy Men retreat to Solitude, but only to get out of the way of Temptation? But by the Doctor's Indulgence, one would think humane Nature was strangely mended; that our Reason was grown more absolute, and we had nothing of the Weakness of former Ages about us.

He allows the *Comick Poets* disguised Oaths, because they are in reality nothing but insignificant by-words, taken up for the most part by good People, to avoid Swearing. Can't good People then avoid Swearing, without talking Nonsense? If there's no signifi-
Defence
of Plays,
p. 65.
tion

tion within these Forms of Speech, to what purpose should the *Poet* lard his Discourse with them? Do words without meaning recommend Conversation? 'Tis plain therefore, they are taken for Oaths, and that the Relish proceeds from the Profaneness. And if the Doctor did not think so, I can't see why he should insist so much upon the Liberty.

As for his alledging the Practice of good Men, and concluding their Judgment from thence; 'tis sufficient to reply, That the most unexceptionable People never use these *disguis'd Oaths*: And as for the *good Men*, if there is any such, who venture thus far, 'tis certainly no part of their Goodness.

He thinks it hard measure not to allow Profaneness on the Stage, *under any pretence of Character or Discipline*^f. I would desire him to answer my Reasons, before he makes this Complaint. But he excepts against an Expedient of mine, with reference to this matter. The Passage stands thus. *To say a Man has been profane in general, and then to punish him, is somewhat intelligible*^g. What can be more ridiculous, says the Doctor, *than this piece of dramatick Justice? How is it possible to distinguish the Character of an Atheist, from a Man of Religion, but by something in his Discourse*^h? Does the Doctor then believe, that unless a Malefactor

^f First Defence of the View, &c. p. 16.

^g Defence of Plays, p. 70, 71.

Malefactor repeats his Crimes at his Tryal, or at least the History of them, the Court has no Power to punish? But making a *Man an Example without Instance, or particularity, is judging without Process, condemning without Proof, and the greatest Injustice imaginable* ^{w.} It seems good Witnesses stands ^{v Ibid.} for nothing with the Doctor. By this arguing, unless a Justice sees a Pick-pocket practise before him, he has no Authority to make his *Mittimus*. And thus, if a Malefactor is indicted for Murther, unless the Jurors are Eye-witnesses of the Fact, they are upon no account to bring him in Guilty. But the Doctor is in a great Fright, for fear my *Theatral piece of Justice should become National*, and then the Case would be sad ^{x.} For if fallies of Profaneness, if a ^{x P. 72.} theistick and blasphemous Rants are not allow'd to prove the Crime, and make a dramatick Malefactor, the consequence may prove Mortal to the Nation. How so? Why, unless this liberty is taken, *who can secure us, but that it may be many an honest Man's Fate to be condemn'd by Report, and hang'd by Hearsay* ^{y ?}

^{y Ibid.}

By this shrewd Objection one would imagine the Theatre was the Standard of Law, and that the ruled cases in Tragedy were more to be regarded than *St. Germain's Maxims*, or the *Precedents* in Coke. 'Tis true, the

the Infection of the *Play-House* reaches a great way, and poisons abundance of People; but for all that I can't believe it has seiz'd the Courts of *Justice*, and left the Tokens upon *Westminster-Hall*. However, if *Plays* have such a dangerous Ascendant, and carry such a force of Malignity, I should think the best security would be to keep out of harm's way, and stand clear of that Diversion.

The Doctor argues, That if the bare repeating any thing profane, &c. is a Sin, then my Collection of Smut, of blasphemous and
² *Id.* p. 73, atheistical Stuff, is not to be excus'd². But
 74 if the citing all these Instances of Scandal and Profaneness is justifiable in the *Short View*, &c. If the Censure and Correction is a warrant for producing the ill Sight, why may not the *Stage Poets* take the same liberty? To this I answer.

First, That the Doctor misreports Matter of Fact: For as to Smut and Oaths, these scandalous Passages are purposely declin'd; there's only a reference to the *Play*, and Page, to justify the Charge.

Secondly, As to *Profaneness*, the case is not parallel. Had I made the profane Passages, it had been to the Doctor's purpose; but I produce nothing but what has been written by the *Poets*, Acted on the *Stage*, and stands publickly in Print. Now there's
 great

great difference between finding a Malefactor, and making one. When a Wretch once appears, and grows infectious, 'tis necessary to mark him for Terror, that the Punishment may be as publick as the Crime: But then 'tis only the necessity which can justify the tryal of such Offendors: Now the *Poets* are under no such necessity; for what necessity can they have, unless that of Interest, to represent a Villain?

On the other hand; To let Libertines and Atheists droll upon Religion, and bluster out Blasphemy and Defiance: To do this under pretence to make them smart for't, is a dangerous Experiment; such a contrivance is like bringing a Disease into a Town, for the sake of trying ones Skill in curing it. But 'tis plain, he that uses this Method makes a Property of his *Patient*, and prescribes to nothing but his own Pocket. To give Poison, to shew the strength of an Antidote, is the Trick of a Mountebank; the Body suffers in the Contest, and something of the Mischief often remains.

The Doctor's next attempt is to prove an inconsistency between my *Short View*, &c. and my *First Defence*. In the latter, I had observ'd, *That the Play-House often spreads those Vices it represents, and that the Humour of the Town is learn'd by shewing it*. *Defence of the View, &c. p.*
How, says the Doctor, *are those Vices re-*
presented

presented on the Stage, the Humour of the Town! This plainly contradicts what Mr. Collier has very confidently asserted in his View, that it was the Stage which poison'd the Town; whereas, by what he here says, we must conclude, that it was the Town rather

^b Defence of
Plays,
p. 75.

that debauch'd the Stage ^b. Whether the Confidence lies in the View, or in the Doctor, the Reader must judge. But then as to the Argument, I say still, that the Stage has poison'd the Town, and Country too: That their stirring offensive Humours, reading upon an infectious Body, and dissecting the Plague, helps to spread the Contagion, and make the Disease more Epidemical. Thus the Play-House propagates its first Mischief, reaches farther into the Nation, and improves the Vices of the Age: And where's the contradiction in all this?

The Doctor agrees in the main with the fourth Chapter in the View, &c. and very honestly grants, the Clergy ought by no means to be *maltraited* and ridicul'd on the

^c Id. p. 82. Stage ^c.

But after all this Civility, the Doctor can't help discovering his partiality to the Stage: For what reason else does he bestow three or four pages to justify the Poet's Conduct in *Œdipus*? When he does as good as own

^d Id. p. 83.

the Dispute is nothing to his purpose ^d. His Objections against my Remarks on this Passage,

stage, he might have found answer'd in my second *Defence* of the *View*^e, &c. and thither I refer him.

^e Reply to
the Ancient
and Modern
Stages sur-
vey'd,
p. 63, 64.

I still affirm, notwithstanding the Doctor's cavil, that *Plays*, where the Argument and Manner are religious and solemn, are *Acted* in Monasteries in *France*, and in other Countries too: And that the Fact stands thus, the Doctor upon enquiry may satisfy himself.

But the Doctor is displeas'd with my not allowing the *Stage* the Liberty of acting a religious Play^f. In defence of this practice^f he alledges *Corneille's Polyucte* on the *Theatre* at *Paris*. He may remember, that the French *Stage*, though far short of the Scandal of the *English*, lay under the Censure of the Church, and the *Players* were refus'd the *Sacrament*^g. Indeed the acting a religious Play upon the modern *Theatre*, would be next to a Libertine's preaching in a House of *Prostitution*; where the Place, and the Person, is enough to burlesque the Discourse, and almost make the *Text* Apocryphal: For this reason, as the Doctor confesses, there was a mighty noise made against *Moliere's Faux Devot*. The ground of the Censure lay upon the *Stage's* Presumption, in meddling with *Sacred* and *Religious* Matters^h. 'Tis true, the Doctor tells us this noise was made by some certain Bigots. But

^f Defence of
Plays,
p. 90.

^g Short
View, &c.
p. 247, 248.

^h Defence
of Plays,
p. 90.

to give Men of Conscience and Piety an ill Name, is an easie way of answering. But *Moliere vindicates his Play*¹. *Moliere's* manner was Licentious, and his Authority signifies nothing. As for his Arguments, they are either drawn from *Pagan* Customs, from unressembling Cases, or Precedents liable to exception.

The Doctor would gladly disprove my Exceptions against the *Stage*, for making too bold with *Quality*^k. But here, after a little Fluttering and Fencing with a *Marquis*, and bringing some disabled Objections on the Board; after a little flourish to discover his good will, he retires within the *Lines*, gives up the Point, owns the *Poet's* oblig'd to treat the *Coronets* with more regard, and not to expose the Nobility in ridiculous Characters^l.

¹ *Id.* p. 100.
101.

His last attack is upon the Authorities cited in the sixth *Chapter* of the *Short View*, &c. And here he seems to have transcrib'd the Objections made by Mr. *Dennis*, and the Author of the *Ancient and Modern Stages survey'd*^m. What has been offer'd by both these Adversaries, I have answer'd long since; and maintain'd the Testimonies both as to Pertinency, and fairness of Citation. And that nothing material might be omitted, my *second Defence* has more than fifty pages upon

^m *Id.* p. 102.
& dein.

upon this Argument ⁿ. Now tho' this last ^{a See Reply to the Vindicator of the Relapse, p. 132. to p. 139.} *Book* has undertaken almost all Dr. *Filmer's* exceptions, and was publish'd in 1699, yet he takes no manner of notice of it. This Conduct is very surprizing ; the best thing I can say for him is, that he never saw my *Reply to Dr. Drake*. This I confess is but a poor excuse : Had the Doctor's enquiry been moderately careful, I fancy he might have spar'd the pains of his *Book*. However, since he has given me so little trouble, this gross oversight of his may be the better pass'd over. I must now consider those few supplemental Remarks, advanc'd in defence of the *Stage*. ^{Second Defence of the View, p. 41 to p. 56.}

In the first place, he endeavours to weaken the Authority of the Philosophers, Historians, and other *Pagan* Writers of Figure, who have censur'd the *Stage*.

To do execution upon this quarter, he supposes *Plays* were acted in the Countries where this Complaint was preferr'd against them. This liberty of acting he infers, amounts to an Allowance and Approbation of the *higher Powers* ° ; and that the publick Allowance is an overbalance, to the dislike of a few private Men, tho' never so considerable ^P : And thus, by putting the *Stage* under the Protection of the Magistracy of *Italy* and *Greece*, he thinks there is no coming at them. But all this pretence of publick Countenance ; ^{Defence of Plays, p. 103. Ibid. &c. p. 104.}

tenance; this shew of the Roman *Legions* is nothing but false *Muster*. For,

First, I have already prov'd the *Stage* has been discountenanc'd and suppress'd in some of the most famous Governments, and never admitted in others ¹.

Second
Defence of
the View,
from p. 4c.
to p. 56.

Secondly, I desire him to consider, whether Connivance can be reasonably construed to Approbation? The *State* sometimes indulges those liberties which we can't suppose the *Legislature* would ever recommend, or justify. The Doctor knows the *Stews* have been publickly suffer'd in *England*, and are now allow'd, as he calls it, in some Countries of *Europe*. But to conclude from hence, that those Governments declare Whoredom no Sin, and make Lewdness part of the *Constitution*, would be a most unjust Censure.

Eliz. 39.
c. 4.
1 Jac. 1.
c. 7.
View, p.
241.

To proceed. I cited two *Acts* of *Parliament* to shew how much the *Stage* stands discountenanc'd by our own *Constitution* ¹. The *Statutes* the Doctor confesses would have been very parr to my purpose, had I not left out two very material words, absolutely necessary to the right understanding of the *Law* ¹. And now where lies the Crime of misreporting? 'Tis only in not reciting the words *wandering Abroad*. And is this such a hideous omission? The Doctor says yes. For from hence it appears, 'tis not

¹ Defence
of Plays,
p. 124.

the Player, but the Stroller, and the Vagabond, that is censur'd by this Law; (meaning the first Statute) ^f. Does the Doctor ^{Id. p. 125, 126, 127.} then think the Players are barr'd the convenience of taking a Journey? Must they not visit their Friends, and solícite their Affairs in the Country? To throw them thus out of common liberty, is more than the Law will allow him. Let but the Stage be left behind, and they may make the Tour of the Island, and take their Range with safety enough. But if they travell'd in the distinctions of their Character, set up their Trade, and carry'd their Diversion along with them; in this case they were look'd on as a Nuisance, and lay terribly expos'd. From whence nothing can be plainer, than that the Penalty of the Act is pointed against the Mystery, strikes full upon the Business, and reaches the Players under that precise denomination.

The Doctor, to make all sure, says the Statute is expir'd, and has been out of Doors above three score Years ^c. But then his Courage does not hold; he is at a loss about the Point, and somewhat afraid the two Statutes are still in force. However, he hopes the Privilege of licensing Players, which is taken from the Peers by the latter Act, does not affect the Crown ^u: And thus he casts about ^{Ibid.} for a farther Protection, retreats to the Pre-rogative,

rogative, and leaves the *Stage* under the Cannon of *Whitehall*. Well! To give him a lift for once, I grant these *Acts are out of Doors*; but what's all this to the Doctor's Advantage? Were they not once part of the *Constitution*, and the Sense of the Wisdom of the Nation? And if so, is not this sufficient for my purpose in citing them?

I observ'd in the *View*, &c. that the Magistracy of *London* address'd Queen *Elizabeth* in *Council*, for leave to pull down the *Play-Houses* within the *City*; that their Petition was granted, and the *Play-Houses* pull'd down^w. It seems these Gentlemen were strongly apprehensive, that the Interest of the *City*, and *Theatre*, were inconsistent with each other: That these Diversions would lay Industry asleep, and disable the pursuits of Wealth, and Honour: That this was the way to throw Business and Sobriety out of young Peoples Heads, and leave them neither Money nor Morals: That when the Lusciousness of the Dialogue, the Musick, and gayety of the Place has once seiz'd and subdu'd their Fancy, they are seldom good for any thing but to repeat their satisfaction at a Tavern; to start an Intreague, or rob their Master's Cash. This is the sense of the *Cities* Petition; and by the Issue of the Matter, it seems the *Queen* and *Council* were much of the same Opinion.

Short
View, &c.
p. 242, 243.

nion. And now which way does the Doctor make this Instance unserviceable? He does not deny, but that the *Play-Houses* were pull'd down: But then, says he, *what of all that?* Is it such a wonder that a wise and gracious Queen should leave the Government of the City to the pious Lord Mayor, and his sanctified Brethren? For all this odd Jest upon *Guildhall*, it seems this permission was an Instance of her Majesties Wisdom. Upon second Thoughts, he won't allow this neither. For the Queen, wise as she was, could not foresee the dangerous consequence of such an Indulgence. Very likely! For a Prince must be unusually sharp sighted, to foresee the danger of discouraging Idleness, and putting a stop to Immorality! But the Doctor won't be taken in this sense. He is throughly convinc'd, this discouraging the Stage, and some other Royal Condescensions of the like Nature^y, gave a mortal Blow to the Nation. This countenance from Court rais'd the Reputation of the Puritanical Faction, and put them in a condition to dispute with King James, and fight King Charles^z. It seems 'tis dangerous Business to check the fallies of Licence and Folly; 'tis enough to pull a Government in pieces: For if People must not be *Rakes*, they will certainly be *Rebels*!

In answer to my Authorities from the Primitive Church, the Doctor replies, that fix

^y Defence
of Plays,
p. 129.

^y One of
these other
Condescen-
sions, was
putting
down the
Gaming
Houses.
^z Idem.
p. 130.

^a *Idem*,
p. 136.

^b *Viz. Third*
Council of
Carthage,
and second
Council of
Chaalons.
See View,
&c. p. 250.

^c *Defence*
of Plays,
p. 136.

of my seven *Councils* are nothing to the purpose ^a. Under favour, two of them by his own supposition, are full to the purpose ^b. But why are the *Councils* foreign to the Point? *Because*, says the Doctor, *they are levell'd against the Players*, not *Plays*; *against the Calling*, not *the thing it self* ^c. Granting his supposition, how does this disable the Exception, and make the Testimony foreign? For are not our *Play-Houses* as much within a Calling as any other Employment? Don't the *Actors* profess the business of the *Stage*, and live and die in that *Mystery*? If therefore, as the Doctor confesses, the *Councils* condemn the Calling of *Players*: If this be so, the Discipline of the Church bears down upon our Age and Country, and strikes the *English*, no less than the *Roman Theatre*.

However, if there's no Relief to be expected from this Quarter, the Doctor can apply to Modern Protection: And here Bishop *Sanderson* is brought to vouch the Lawfulness of the *Stage Calling*. Let us see then how far this Learned Casuist serves the purpose: He affirms, That *he will not say the Calling is unlawful*. And then having advis'd the *Players* to examine, *whether they might not have been better employ'd in another way*; and what weight there is in the *Motives* which determin'd them to this
Employ-

Employment. After this Advice, I say, he leaves the decision to their Consciences, and concludes, *If their own Hearts condemn them not, neither do I*^d. To this I answer,

First, That the Bishop, as Dr. Filmer cites him, declares positively, *That if the Players should have been tryed by the Bench of Fathers and Councils of Old, or would have put it to the most Voices among later Divines, both Popish and Reform'd, they had been all utterly cast, and condemn'd—most holding not the Calling only, but the Practice, and Thing it self, unlawful, and damnable*^e. ^d Serm. ad Pop. 4.
^p. 252.
Defence of Plays,
^p. 137.
^e. Ibid.

Now what will the Doctor gain by this Testimony? He has only brought the Bishop into *view*, to make a singular Figure, and be overlay'd with numbers: For notwithstanding the advantage of this Prelate's Memory, I conceive impartial Judges will not believe him a Counter-poise to the *Fathers and Councils*: That his private Authority is preferable to the general Sense of all Ages and Countries, and sufficient to set aside the *Verdict* of the Ancient and Modern Church.

Secondly, The *Stage*, in the Bishop's time, was much more inoffensive than it has been since; the *indecencies* were not so rank, nor the fallies of Prophaneness so frequent and hideous. That Matter of Fact stands thus, is evident from the printed *Plays of Shakespear*,

spear and *Ben Johnson*, of *Beaumont* and *Fletcher*. 'Tis true, even this Entertainment, though comparatively clean, is oftentimes too luscious and exceptionable. Farther; the Bishop in all likelyhood, never troubled himself to study the *Stage*, and examine their Performances: He only thought it possible to stand clear of Mischief, and make an inoffensive *Play*. Upon this general Idea, he gives somewhat of his Opinion, and draws towards a Resolution: But even here he appears cold and disencin'd, and comes short of a state of Neutrality. The Doctor confesses, the Bishop *does not pretend to recommend the Calling of a Player*

Ib. p. 136. as eligible ^f. Right: All the favour he allows, is only *not absolutely to condemn it*. But does it follow from hence, that the Bishop would have lent his Countenance to the Licence and Immorality of the Modern *Stage*? Would he have settled their Consciences in Smut and Profaneness, and given them his Blessing to debauch the Nation? Can we imagine the Judgment and Piety of this Prelate, could be so far surpriz'd, as to furnish them with his Authority for such wretched purposes? Arm them with the strength of his Character, to drive over Decency and Shame? To *read* upon a putrified Carcass, and shew Nature, to the affront of Religion. That this is the practice of the *Stage*,

Stage, I have prov'd to a demonstration. Now if Bishop *Sanderson* does not allow this Liberty, to what purpose is his Testimony brought?

To go somewhat lower: Is it likely the Bishop's casuistry would indulge even the Doctor's latitude, and come forward to his Plan of Reformation? That is, permit Prostitutes and Bawds to make their Character in rank Language; Atheists swear and blaspheme, to let the *Audience* know what they are, and encourage the cutting of Throats, upon pretended Points of Honour? All this scandalous practice the Doctor pleads for, provided there is but Discipline at the end on't. But does this compass of Liberty agree with the Bishop's Character? Or do we find such loose Resolutions in his Cases of Conscience? No; He has given us no occasion to blast his Reputation in this manner, and draw such a Blemish upon his Memory.

The Doctor therefore will be oblig'd to quit his Hold, and look out farther. I confess, if he could have carry'd off a *Miter*, and made the *Pulpit* desert to the *Stage*, tho' the Cause could not have been gain'd, there would have been something of Exploit in it.

The Doctor now comes forward to the *Fathers*, endeavours to make their Testimony inoffensive, and turn off the Point of their Satyr from the *English Stage*.

The

The force of his Argument lies in three Considerations ; the first of which is drawn from the Character of the Persons: And here he very fairly tells us, *They were all Men of great Learning, and extraordinary Sanctity.*

—On whom God Almighty, in Favour, in Pity and Compassion to his distress'd Church, pour'd down more than ordinary Blessings, and a larger portion of his Grace : Men in short, that by a long and assiduous Study, and constant practice of Piety, deservedly rais'd themselves above the common level of Mankind, and have ever since been honour'd and distinguish'd by all succeeding Ages, as the Fathers of the

† Ib. p. 146, Church &c.

147.

Now by this commendation, which is no more than their due, one would think the Authority of the *Fathers* should be next to infallible: What may we not expect from the direction of such Persons? Where Nature is improv'd to the utmost, and unusually enlighten'd from above? Where there's no Mutiny of Passions, no Secular Interest, no overbalance of Pleasure to mislead the Judgment? Who would imagine such Men as these should be so insignificant, nay so dangerous in their Advice? Does the odds of their Understanding, and the impartiality of their Temper, disable their Character, and make their word go for nothing? Are they blind-ed with too much Light, and perfectly over-

lay'd

lay'd with Virtue and Sense? 'Tis somewhat difficult to clear the matter, and account for the Mystery upon these Principles. Yet so it is, if we believe the Doctor, and therefore he must have a care not to stand to the Umpirage of these antiquated Guides : For to practise up to their Maxims, as this Gentleman continues, *would certainly do more hurt than good, and make perhaps some Atheists, and a great many Hypocrites* ^h. To do the ^h *Idem*, Doctor right, he grants the Doctrine of the ^{P. 148.} *Fathers* was seasonable when they wrote ; ^{Ibid.} but now their prescriptions, like old Drugs, have lost their Force, and signifie nothing. I grant the Sun has risen, and the Moon chang'd a great many times since the *Fathers* were living ; but for all that, Christianity, and Mankind, are just the same still. Neither the Malice of the Devil, the Punishment of Vice, or the Rewards of Virtue, are a jot alter'd : Why then should we press for new Liberty, and go less in our circumspection than former Ages? If the Rule must bend to Practice, Principles be govern'd by Humour, and the Laws give way in proportion to the degeneracy of the Times : If this is the true expedient, to what a miserable declension in Morals must we sink at last? The consequence of this Casuistry will *dispense* with the *Bible*, and make the Apostles *Writings* as little significant as those of the *Fathers*.

Farther ;

¹ P. 2, 3,
12, 14.

^k Defence
of Plays,
p. 152.

¹ Idem,
p. 156.

^m View, &c.
p. 283, 284.
Second De-
fence, p. 59,
60.

Farther; That the Destruction of *Hea-thenism*, and the Respit from Persecution, does not alter the measure of Duty in this case, I have prov'd in my second Defence of the *Short View*ⁱ, &c. and thither I refer the Doctor. In this *Tract*, his *third observable* drawn from the *Nature of those Plays the Fathers wrote against*^k, is likewise examin'd, and shewn unserviceable to his purpose.

His next effort is to encourage the Duels of the *Stage*, and keep Quarrels and murdering in Countenance¹. Now in my Opinion, he should have answer'd my Reasons against this Custom^m, before he had given it a Licence, and brought it within the Privilege of his *Reformation*.

And now having done with the Doctor's *Book*, I would gladly prevail with him to consider, that the Defence of the *Play-House* is an impracticable undertaking. 'Tis to no purpose to go about to rub out the colours of Virtue and Vice; Ribaldry and Profaneness will ne're pass undiscover'd in a Christian Country. The subject is much too coarse to be overcast with Sophistry and Distinctions: All attempts of this kind lie open to miscarriage and disappointment: For by endeavouring to perplex the Cause, and darken the evidence of Truth, a Man is oftentimes smother'd in his own Smoak, and raises a Mist to lose himself in.

FINIS.



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